United Nations E/CN.6/2004/NGO/41

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 February 2004

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-eighth session
1-12 March 2004
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further action and initiatives

Statement submitted by the International Alliance of Women, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and the International Federation of Women Lawyers, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* * *

* E/CN.6/2004/1.

04-24532 (E) 010304

The members of our organizations are dedicated to the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are committed to building a more peaceful, just and free world. We, therefor, recognize the utmost importance of women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict building. We also recognize that building a lasting peace has become as important as ending conflicts. After armed conflict, the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the whole of civil society must be addressed to form a stable and law-abiding society.

The international community and particularly the United Nations have increasingly come to recognize the contribution women have to make in forming this stable society. Indeed, they recognize women have a vital role to play in the development and well being of their country at every level. The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 is in itself a significant contribution to the expanded awareness of the international community of the importance of this reality. In underlining the importance of the need for women's voices to be heard at decision-making levels, the Security Council has once again validated the importance of allowing women to exercise their rights and responsibilities as adults and citizens of their countries. As such, women should be called to be at the peace table in the aftermath of conflicts and at the decision-making level in the reconstruction process. As women's rights are increasingly recognized, so also are their responsibilities.

A heartening example of the success of women's role in this process, which we have before us today, is the adoption of the Constitution of Afghanistan on the 4th of January, 2004. FIDA and IAW fully endorse the statement of Ms. Ferida Acar, the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) when she said: "there was a special call to celebrate in that the newly approved Constitution explicitly guarantees equal rights and duties before the law. Gender equality is a crucial factor not only in achieving sustainable peace but also in increasing respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in all societies. Enshrining the principle of gender equality within the Constitution is a vital starting point for the transformation and reconstruction of Afghanistan. It legitimizes the important role played by women and girls in Afghanistan in reshaping their future and in rebuilding their country." In 2004 post conflict peace building in Afghanistan, there is now a base to work from with a Constitution which as law gives all its citizens a better opportunity to participate more fully in the life of their country.

Indeed, to restate a matter of principle FIDA and IAW are committed to the principle of equality, i.e. the equal participation (as equal partners) of men and women in the development of their society. The participation of men and boys in achieving this more just society has paramount importance for our organizations. On the simplest level our members have been

(and are now) fortunate in having the personal support of husbands, brothers, fathers and men who have partnered and supported us in our efforts. They have often also served as role models and mentors, being themselves involved in progressive movements. Countless stories about these farsighted, understanding men would fill volumes in the annals of every affiliate. On a more public level the work of FIDA and IAW has focused on a multi-faceted educational program – from those directed to elementary school on gender stereotyping to workshops and seminars on violence against women. Another major focus of our work has been to gain support for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. These efforts have given our members the opportunity to work with like-minded men again.

We take heart from these contacts while fully realizing that the cultural practices, which discriminate against women, are deeply embedded in our societies and are not easily overcome. The support of men and boys today in achieving gender equality is not only greatly appreciated, it is essential for the success of the struggle to reach a more just and fair society.